

STATE OF MARYLAND

**MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT**

**Shari T. Wilson, Secretary**

**BILL NO:** Senate Bill 841

**COMMITTEE:** Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

**POSITION:** Oppose

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**TITLE:** Environment – Landfills – Methane Testing

**BILL ANALYSIS:** This bill would require the Department to conduct a study of each landfill that has been closed for at least 5 years, to determine if there are methane emissions from the landfill and if there is a potential to use the methane for electricity generation. In addition, the bill would require the Department, upon completion of each study, to prepare a report of the findings of the study and submit the reports to the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee, the House Environmental Matters Committee, and the Director of the Maryland Energy Administration (MEA).

**POSITION AND RATIONALE:** The Department opposes Senate Bill 841. The Department recognizes the benefits of collecting methane emissions from landfills to prevent their dispersal into the atmosphere and for the generation of electricity. The provisions of this bill, however, would entail a prolonged, expensive evaluation of hundreds of closed landfill sites. There are at least 97 closed landfills and hundreds of closed dumps that would have to be evaluated. While the locations of the closed landfills are known, there are an estimated 500 closed unpermitted dumpsites in Maryland, many of which the Department does not have accurate information regarding location. Many of the dumpsite locations are on private property, which would require the Department to obtain legal access in some way prior to conducting the required studies. At a minimum, this bill would require the hiring of at least four additional staff and the purchase of additional equipment and training, costing approximately \$250,000 in the first year of implementation.

The Department routinely requires landfill operators to perform methane gas monitoring and reviews that data. The object of the current program is to detect the migration of methane gas in the ground, to prevent explosive concentrations from developing in offsite structures, not to determine whether enough gas is being produced by a landfill to warrant electricity generation.

In Maryland, some local governments are already collecting and managing methane gas or investigating collection of methane gas for its economic benefits. There currently are: 26 landfills in 18 counties that burn methane, two of which will be installing gas to energy systems; 5 landfills in 3 counties that generate electricity or heat from methane; and 3 landfills in 3 counties where new methane management systems are being installed. One methane management system that collected methane for fuel in Baltimore City is inactive.

Since the Department does not have expertise in methane gas collection for electricity generation or current resources to address the provisions in this bill, it would be preferred that local governments and private landfill operators, which currently manage methane gas issues, continue to investigate and implement collection of methane gas for its environmental and economic benefits.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION,**  
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